

Peercoaching and employee engagement



IS THERE A DIRECT CORRELATION BETWEEN THE TWO?



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Sustainability of proper behaviours, change and employee engagement in today's workplace is a continuous challenge. Organizations are spending billions of dollars in training, continuous improvement initiatives, trying to motivate their employees with a return on their investment that is not even worth mentioning here. It's almost a shame. Now, does it mean there is nothing we can do about it? No, there is. As mentioned in Marie Forleo's book - Everything is Figureoutable-, there is always a way. In this white paper, we want to propose an option to improve the ROI of any business when starting to invest in a continuous improvement structure, training or even if they want to initiate an environment of culture change.

There are numerous articles / studies that you can find on the web on why organizations are having a hard time maintaining process improvement or continuous improvement initiatives. And, if we want to push it a little bit further, let's talk about improvement that should evolve. Let's not forget that organizations are dynamic entities that work to stay ahead of innovations. When we talk about continuous improvement (CI), the word is very clear, **CONTINUOUS**. It means once we have improved a process, we are not done, it should be reviewed again and again.



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HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SOME OF THE STUDIES
I AM REFERRING TO.

An HBR magazine article dated December 2018 titled “Making process improvements stick”. This article reveals alarming results on a major CI initiative in a large European Bank. We often say that larger organizations have the resources to entertain those initiatives, but even with financial and human resources, the challenge of sustainability remains.

How about this one from the Operational Excellence Society with an article entitled “Why 70% of all process improvement projects are failing?” Wow! That’s high; are you surprised? Unfortunately, we have seen clients go through some major CI initiatives successfully in the first year and, over time, maintaining those gains and improving them was and continues to be a challenge.

Now, does it only apply to continuous improvement projects? Not at all.

You might be surprised to hear that Leadership training has its own challenges. According to an HBR article dated October 2016 on why Leadership training fail and what to do about it, organizations are spending billions of dollars every year on the subject with a small to no return on their investment. Amazing! And again, the size of the organization is not a factor.



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In a recent talk while participating in a conference in the states in 2019, I learned that most of the participants that attend those conferences will not apply what they have learned. We're not talking cheap conferences here. Those sessions, if you include everything from travel expenses, registration fees and the person being away of the office, amount to several thousands of dollars. The ROI on this? Pitiful!

We see a similar phenomenon occurring in the strategic coaching services that we offer where organization will embark on a strategic coaching initiative and after a year, if they don't renew it, it doesn't take long before they start losing ground on the gains made during the year of coaching. It's like taking a professional sports team (NHL, NBA, CFL) and you see the players, after a year, saying thank you to the coach and decide to coach themselves. Have you ever seen that? Could you just imagine the outcome of such a scenario?

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So, what do we do about this embarrassing situation? Give up? Accept it as a fact of life? No sorry, no can do! It is not in our language.

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The economic welfare of our region (Atlantic Canada) and Canada depends on businesses to make us great again.

We know that one of the solutions available to us is the principle of peer to peer coaching. So, let's talk about peer coaching.

Based on numerous papers on peer coaching, there is a common point of view that this is the least expensive and most underutilized tool today for helping anyone to grow as a person. What is peer coaching compared to mentoring and external coaching?

Peer means a colleague with no authority over you, or someone from another organization with the same amount of experience as you. Coaching based on this approach by the John Maxwell Team means helping someone answer their own challenges. In other words, helping others to help themselves.

Now, mentoring is a format where someone with more experience than you will show you how to do something. You will leapfrog your knowledge with theirs. Avoiding the consequences of making mistakes.

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Typical coaching is often accomplished by hiring a professional coach that will come and work on specific aspects of the person to be improved.

The most common form a peer coaching, which is well known in the business community, is the principle of Business Round Tables where individuals like CEOs of different companies meet to discuss issues. I was part of such a group for 7 years. It is a source of valuable counselling (almost free) and support, it is a strong statement for peer group commitment if the structure allows it and, in face of today's rapid changes, it is difficult for any leader to stay abreast of the market and using that forum is a very good way to stay ahead of the game.

Now, the idea that we want to propose here is to integrate peer coaching in your organization. Colleagues, coaching each other to achieve something they have in common for the organization.

Why not use this methodology to increase the sustainability of continuous improvement or even to use it as a culture change in your organization? Try to imagine this scenario in your organization. You match two people together, they meet once a week for a maximum of 30 minutes and they keep each other accountable towards their behaviours, commitment and challenges. What if, being accountable to someone internally, that has no hierarchical power over you, would that help the engagement of your people at an all-new level?

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In studying for this white paper, I came across the McClelland's theory of needs. David Clarence McClelland was an American psychologist noted for his work on motivational needs theory. According to his study, we have three principal needs; Power, Achievement and Affiliation.

Do you believe that peer coaching can have an impact on those three elements? We can tell you YES! There is clear evidence with all the studies completed on this topic that peer coaching within an organization has a direct impact on the affiliation of one individual to a group which in this case is their employers.

If you have read our previous white paper on employee engagement, it is hard not to consider the peer coaching approach in your organization knowing it will have a direct impact on the team's engagement.

IF YOU WONDER WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU, HERE ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF PEER COACHING WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION:

1. *Being equal, we speak the same language.*
2. *Learning from each other's mistakes (been there done that)*
3. *Support that is available anytime during working hours*
4. *Tools applicable to the job*
5. *We both understand the culture in place*
6. *Increased accountability*
7. *Increased performance (personal and organizational)*
8. *Increased engagement*
9. *Increased knowledge*

“ Now, do you want to implement this practice?
Great! Here is how it should be done ”

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FIRST, YOU MUST BE SERIOUS ABOUT IT.

Which means if you start this, you can't back track. It won't be easy, so you need to fully understand what you are getting your organization into. Some matches won't work, some will, and some will stall. But don't give up. Don't give ammunition to your naysayers that believe it is another flavour of the month thing.

THE MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT WILL BE THE PAIRING OF YOUR EMPLOYEES.

You have to make sure there will be an affinity between the two, that they fairly think alike and that they respect each other. Not because of rankings but simply because they trust each other. To help you out in the matching of candidates, you can use psychometric tools that measure personality types and communication styles. Putting an extroverted person with a perfectionist is a recipe for trouble, so put some of the odds on your side.

YOU NEED TO ADAPT A METHODOLOGY.

Will it be the John Maxwell framework, the Toyota Kata or any other peer coaching methodology that you can find on the web?

You will need to provide structured training to explain the rules of peer coaching and how it should be done. Not everyone knows what coaching means. Let's not forget that for most of us, the first time we experienced coaching was probably when we played a team sport. And in that environment the coach was more an authority figure with knowledge. Peer coaching, to be successful, can't be based on authority. To the contrary, there should never be that type of relationship in a peer coaching model. Also, participants must understand that in this model, it is not a telling format but asking questions and listening are the golden rules. We work on the basis that our colleague knows the answer to his challenge. Our role is to make them aware of it and find a solution.

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A SET TIME.

A set time should be determined with minimum disruptions to allow proper coaching to take place. Those sessions should be a priority; therefore, the cancellation of a session should be out of the question unless it is a matter of life or death.

The sessions should last for a maximum of 30 minutes with an action plan as the only tool of communication activity for each participant.

Identify the critical behaviours required of participants to make it work. Those should be taught in the training.

ESTABLISH KPI'S.

Establish KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) that will demonstrate how it is working and what needs to be improved or adjusted.

Last but not the least, we encourage some kind of process audit to make sure that the process and the participants don't derail from the principals of peer coaching.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The owner and president of DirecSys, a NB company located in Dieppe, Marc-André's mission is to help organizations through the growth of their employees. Marc-André has completed his Six Sigma Master Black Belt with a major in innovation. Being a certified coach via the John Maxwell organization, he has a passion for understanding human behaviour at work. Marc-André works relentlessly at implementing the concept of organizational health in large-scale and custom production environments, in the manufacturing and service sectors. In other words, re humanizing the workplace. He is a learner at the service of learners.

If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me.
It will be my pleasure to discussion with you further.



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PEERCOACHING

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